

Clause 20 of the bill amends section 30.1 of the UI act so that claimants disqualified on the basis of section 28 will lose all their benefits. Section 28 claimants are those who are fired for misconduct or who quit without just cause. These same claimants lose seven to twelve weeks of benefits and their benefits after that are reduced to 50 per cent.

Our position is that this penalty is severe enough. With that kind of penalty very few people would quit a job just for the fun of it, particularly in an economy where they risk getting no job again.

The minister likes to ask if anyone who quits a job without good reason should get UI. I would like to ask the minister: Does he believe workers who had good reasons for quitting their jobs should still lose all their benefits? Under this law that is exactly what is going to happen. No one really deserves to lose all benefits. The worst part of this legislation is that many of these people will be innocent victims; people who will not be able to prove their case. We all know that under this system you are guilty until you prove yourself innocent.

We are calling Motion No. 13 the Quebec amendment. As suggested by some Conservative members from Quebec, the bill as it stands now is too inhumane. We therefore suggest a three-step process. The first time a person is fired is the first event. The claimant remains under the current legislation of seven to twelve week exclusions. If there is a second event a person gets the maximum 12 week exclusion. Only if there is a third event will the claimant suffer a total loss of benefits. Motion No. 11 is included as cross-referencing for the purpose of the Quebec amendment. These corrections would have to be made to make Motion No. 13 apply.

• (1130)

This is the essence of the amendment the Quebec Tories who protested Bill C-105 wanted to see. We are putting it in for them. Allowing workers three chances obviously is more humane. While we in no way agree that it would make the bill acceptable, as with any of the amendments it is obviously better that total loss of benefits should not be the penalty until someone has quit or been fired on three successive occasions.

Government Orders

Under clause 20(4), once a person is disqualified none of the insurable weeks of employment prior to the event can be used to requalify for a later claim. I am running out of time but I would like to point out that with respect to time which has been earned previously and has not been used up in no way under any circumstances should the person be disqualified from using it. This is simply overkill. It is using a shotgun to kill flies and there are many other analogies one could make.

I hope that the minister and the government members will consider their opposition to these amendments as I believe they make vital corrections. The impact of this bill will be incredibly severe. Surely the government cannot object to some amendments which will soften it.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take part in this debate at report stage. I have one or two points I want to make. I know a lot has been said on both sides of the House and I know that members on this side have for the past several weeks condemned Bill C-113, particularly as it relates to unemployment insurance.

I have been involved in UI debates for many years and if there is one area of law making that increases the intensity of debate around here, it is amendments from time to time in relation to the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

Every government we have had in the 22 years I have been a member of this House has in its so-called reform approach to UI come in with measures that are ever more Draconian. For example, the Liberals a number of years ago reduced benefits from 66 per cent of income down to 60 per cent of income. Now they are screaming because the Conservative government is about to reduce the benefits from 60 per cent to 57 per cent.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Conservative government is using the Unemployment Insurance Act as a weapon in its arsenal for deficit reduction but it is doing it on the backs of the unemployed. That is simply not fair.

I am a member not of the labour committee but of the justice committee of this House. I cannot help but draw certain parallels between the Unemployment Insurance Commission and how it operates and the criminal justice system in this country and how it operates.